

### **Thelma Flanagan**

Thelma Errington Flanagan, born August 25, 1896, was the eighth child of John and Sheba Flanagan. She was born on a farm near Farmville, NC in a large country home on a slight crest known as Cherry Hill. As she recalled, there was only one cherry tree anywhere around but the name stuck. She and a brother, Leon, were close in age and were close friends all their lives.

There were twelve children in her family. One sister died as a young child and one sister died about twenty years old of tuberculosis. Other than those two losses, it was a happy family with loving parents who provided for all the children well and with children who looked after each other. Thelma's father, John Flanagan, had health problems early in life which plagued him all his life. Thelma gives him credit, however, for not letting that keep him from providing handsomely for his family. Her mother was of a like mind.

Her family lived on the farm in the ten room house, gave their children a wonderful home, and saw to it that they had good educations and a nurturing family life. The small town of Farmville, some three miles away from the farm had a good school and the children were able to take advantage of that opportunity. Her father provided a surrey with a double team for them to drive to school. Many children in that day had to walk to school. She had some interesting experiences with her brother, Leon, who was near enough her age to have classes with her. Irish humor abounded in the household.

In a day when women did not often work outside the home, Thelma was able to convince her father to let her do so. She earned teaching qualifications from Atlantic Christian College in Wilson, NC and had a rewarding teaching career after having a mercantile career where she used her mathematical ability and developed considerable selling ability which would be useful later.

Thelma became a Seventh Day Adventist and was a dedicated member. She became a strong advocate of church literature and in fact developed a literature ministry. Her family supported her through her teaching and this ministry, helping her through East Carolina Teachers College and a church college as well. Her dedication was so strong she eschewed a married life and became as she said. "A maiden lady by my own choice." She continued the work in church literature until her retirement.

Thelma's final days were in a nursing home in Farmville. She lived a long and fruitful life. Had she lived a few more months, she would have been 100 years old. Her philosophy might be summed up in a quote in her later life, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." As a sensitive, empathetic person, that is a good epitaph for her.